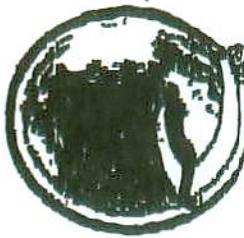


06-000630



Western  
Pacific  
Regional  
Fishery  
Management  
Council

February 17, 2006

Carlos M. Gutierrez  
Secretary of Commerce  
Herbert Clark Hoover Bldg., Rm 5858  
14<sup>th</sup> Street & Constitution Ave, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Gutierrez,

As you know the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) are being considered for designation as a National Marine Sanctuary. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council continues to support this action. We are writing today to ask for your support of the small fishing operations that have traditionally fished in this area.

Allowing mixed uses of Sanctuary resources is the rule rather than the exception as all but one existing Sanctuary allows some type of fishing. Indeed the National Marine Sanctuaries Act includes "to facilitate to the extent practicable with the primary objective of resource protection, all public and private uses of the resources of these marine areas not prohibited pursuant to other authorities" as one of its overall purposes and policies of the National Marine Sanctuary System.

NOAA's September 20, 2004 "Advice and Recommendations on Development of Draft Fishing Regulations under the National Marine Sanctuaries Act Section 304(a)(5) states of the NWHI bottomfish fishery that "the allowable gear and fishing methods are highly selective, minimizing habitat impacts and unwanted bycatch". Regarding the pelagic trolling in the NWHI, it states that "the current fishing gear and methods have little to no impact on the habitat and have very low levels of bycatch."

The majority of participants in these small boat fisheries are owner operators using vessels which are limited to 60' in length. Many operations are family owned businesses whose members have fished in the NWHI for decades and are now passing their knowledge and skills to their children and grandchildren. These families represent our Nation's best legacy of hard work, individualism and achievement. As one fisherman puts it "this is the American dream, to go out and work hard and hope to do even better tomorrow".

Not only does this small fishery provide employment and the continuation of family and cultural traditions, it also provides half of the Hawaii-caught bottomfish sold in the United States. Opakapaka is Hawaii's signature dish and is served in white tablecloth restaurants in Hawaii and around the world.

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A Council Authorized by the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976  
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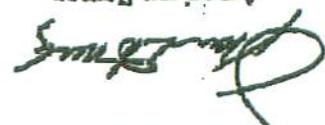


Sean Martin

Council Vice-Chair  
Guam



Council Chair  
American Samoa



Frank McCay

## Sincerely

The truth of the matter is that impacting the NWHI is coming from private foundations with deep pockets to promote their anti-globalizing agenda. The choice is one of necessity. Destroying the lives of ordinary working Americans versus supporting sound science that shows that the NWHI can support a variety of uses, both scientific and non-extractive. Please do not succumb to special interest groups that know and care little about Hawaii's people, culture or resources. Do the right thing and support our hard-working Hawaiian and other communities.

In fact, closing these fisheries will result in the increased importation of fishery products from other countries, some of which have little to no healthy regulations in place. Others of which are known to labor standards. This domino effect will lose that valuable, sustainable, community and fisheries dependency dependent on communities whose policies we simply cannot support.

Closing the NWHI fisheries will send a message that we have not and cannot sustainably manage the fishery. This is simply not the case, as NOAA's own studies has many demonstrated. It is beginning to appear that science and reason is being disregarded and replaced with preconceived "philosophies" and moralized pandering to those who view human needs and realities as unimportant to responsible environmental stewardship.